



Don't feed your mind with negative thoughts. If you do, you will come to believe them.
-Catherine Pulsifer

Manage YOUR Crooked Thoughts

Is YOUR thinking Crooked; The Problem

The ANTIDOTE Simple as ABC with Practice

The ABCDE Technique & 10 twisted ways of thinking

The PROBLEM ----The Ten Forms of Twisted Thinking

David Burns 'The Feeling Good Handbook'

What are the ones you use most frequently?.....Self Reflect

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The interior 'critic' voice – give it a name of one person who you do not rate their opinion (only one person allowed in the universe!) Can be someone you know or not but one that is strong enough to help you 'repel' the negative internal critic.

My favourite one for repelling thoughts is.....and make sure you use initials only, lower case to minimise deliberately their 'unimportance and irrelevance' to you.....dt (guess who?)

Use the ABCDE to navigate a better way – build the interior muscle -Practice is the Key

1. All or nothing thinking

You see things in black or white categories. If a situation falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure. When a young woman on a diet ate a spoonful of ice cream, she told herself, "I've blown my diet completely". This thought upset her so much she gobbled down an entire quart of ice cream!

2. Overgeneralization

You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as 'always' or 'never' when you think about it. A depressed salesman became terribly upset when he noticed bird dung on the windshield of his car. He told himself, "Just my luck! Birds are *always* crapping on my car"!

3. Mental filter

You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, so that your visions of all of reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolours a beaker of water. Example:

You receive many positive comments about your presentation to a group of associates at work, but one of them says something mildly critical. You obsess about this reaction for days and ignore all the positive feedback.

4. Discounting the positive

You reject positive experiences by insisting they “don’t count”. If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn’t good enough or that anyone could have done as well. Discounting the positive takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.

5. Jumping to conclusions

You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion.

Mindreading: Without checking it out, you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you.

Fortune-telling: You predict that things will turn out badly. Before a test you may tell yourself, “I’m really going to blow it. What if I fail?” If you’re depressed you may tell yourself, “I’ll never get better”.

6. Magnification

You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings, or you minimise the importance of your desirable qualities. This is also called the ‘binocular trick’.

7. Emotional reasoning

You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: “I feel terrified about going on airplanes. It must be very dangerous to fly” or “I feel guilty. I must be a rotten person” or “I feel angry. This proves I’m being treated unfairly”. Or “I feel so inferior. This means I’m a second rate person. Or “I feel hopeless. I must really be hopeless”.

8. “Should Statements”

You tell yourself that things *should* be the way you hoped or expected them to be. After playing a difficult piece on the piano, a gifted pianist told herself, “I shouldn’t have made so many mistakes”. This made her feel so disgusted that she quit practicing for several days.

“Musts”, “Ought’s” and “have to’s” are similar offenders.

“Should statements” that are directed against other people or the world in general lead to anger and frustration: “He shouldn’t be so stubborn and argumentative”.

Many people try to motivate themselves with should and shouldn’t, as if they were delinquents who had to be punished before they could be expected to do anything. “I shouldn’t eat that doughnut”. This usually doesn’t work because all these shoulds and musts make you feel rebellious and you get the urge to do just the opposite. Dr. Albert Ellis has called this “*musterbation*”. I call it the “should” approach to life.

9. Labelling

Labelling is an extreme form of all or nothing thinking.

Instead of saying “I made a mistake,” you attach a negative label to yourself: “I’m a loser”.

You might also label yourself “a fool” or a failure” or “a jerk”. Labelling is quite irrational because you are not the same as what you do. Human beings exist, but “fools”, “losers”, and “jerks” do not. These labels are just useless abstractions that lead to anger, anxiety, frustration, and low self-esteem.

You may also label others. When someone does something that rubs you the wrong way, you may tell yourself: “He’s a S.O.B” Then you feel that the problem is with that person’s “character” or “essence” instead of with their thinking or behaviour. You see them as totally bad. This makes you feel hostile and hopeless about improving things and leaves little room for constructive communication

10. Personalisation and blame

Personalisation occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn’t entirely under your control.

When a woman received a note that her child was having difficulties at school, she told herself, “this shows what a bad mother I am”, instead of trying to pinpoint the cause of the problem so that she would be helpful to her child. When another woman’s husband beat her, she told herself, “If only I were better at everything, he wouldn’t beat me”.

Personalisation leads to guilt, shame, and feelings of inadequacy.

Some people do the opposite. They blame other people or their circumstance for their problems, and they overlook ways that they might be contributing to the problem: “The reason my marriage is so lousy is because my spouse is totally unreasonable”. Blame usually doesn’t work very well because other people will resent being scapegoated and they will just toss the blame right back in your lap.

It’s like the game of hot potato – no one wants to get struck with it.

Start a new job or ask your boss for a raise, you will probably feel a little nervous. It’s often best to accept these negative feelings. I don’t believe that you should try to be happy all the time, or in total control of your feelings. That would just be a perfectionistic trap. You cannot always be completely rational and objective. Certainly I’m not! I have my share of shortcomings, my dark moments of self-doubt, my periods of irritability. I believe these experiences give us the opportunity for growth, for intimacy, and for a deeper comprehension of what it means to be human.

David Burns, *The Feeling Good Handbook*

THE SOLUTION & ANTIDOTE

Challenge YOUR Crooked Thinking?

Dr. Albert Ellis

Crooked thoughts are extreme, exaggerated, irrational and often unhelpful thoughts that can stop you looking at a situation in a clear way. They can lead to uncomfortable feelings, which might then result in you doing all kinds of things – e.g. eating too much, exercising too little – leading to weight gain.

Do you ever do the following?:

- Exaggerate or make mountains out of molehills?
- Take things personally?
- Take responsibility when it's not yours to take?
- Over-generalise?
- Try to mind-read and second-guess what other people think?

These are all examples of crooked thinking. Everyone makes these thinking errors but the trick is learning to recognise them, challenge them and come up with a more balanced thought. An ABC Thought Log helps you challenge unhelpful ways of thinking.

Using a Thought Log:

1. Start with any box that works for you. If you find it easier to identify with the situation or event, start with box A; if you can identify your thoughts start with box B.
2. Assuming you start with box A, use box B to investigate if you're making thinking errors and write the likely consequences in box C.
3. If you discover you're making thinking errors, what more realistic and useful thought fits the evidence better? Write this in box D
4. In box E, write down how you might feel about the situation and how you could now behave.

**A – ACTIVATING
SITUATION**

Unexpected traffic jam on the way to work.

B – BELIEFS

(Thoughts)

I'll be late for work. My boss will be furious and fire me

C – CONSEQUENCES

Feelings: tense, angry, anxious. Your behaviour: drive aggressively and arrive at work hot and stressed.

**D – DISPUTING AUTOMATIC
THOUGHTS AND BELIEFS**

Take a step back and examine your beliefs (thoughts): is it true that people get fired for being late once? Can I remember that ever happening before?

New, more realistic, useful and balances thought: My boss might not be pleased but will understand if I explain the situation.

**E-EFFECTS OF THE NEW WAY OF
THINKING ON YOUR FEELINGS AND
BEHAVIOUR**

How do you feel now?

How might you behave?

I feel calmer now and my hearts' stopped racing. I'll ring the office on my mobile to explain what's happened and how late I'm likely to be and I'll get straight to work as soon as I arrive.

ABCDEF

Activating Event (A)	Beliefs (B) (about A)		Consequences ('C) (of B)		Dispute ANTS	Energisation	Future
Describe Actual/Anticipated Event	List of dysfunctional thoughts & images	List of functional alternative thoughts & images	List of dysfunctional emotions & behaviours	List of functional emotions & behaviours	Personal or coaching context	Empowerment	Future Routine/patterns that embed learning

Using a Thought Log

What Will I **STOP** doing?

What Will I **START** doing?

What Will I **CONTINUE** doing?